

GOD'S OR CAESAR'S?

By Rev. James T. Pollock.

From the viewpoint of all American history, the chief duty of the government toward its citizens is a material one—almost a materialistic one. It is to keep the country prosperous, to have every citizen in position to earn a livelihood, to adopt policies that will afford every man an opportunity to support himself decently, as well as his family, if he have one.

Thus to allow every man full opportunity to clothe, feed and shelter himself, to protect him in so doing, to keep the nation in condition to protect him in so doing, and to prepare him by the elements of education for so doing where he cannot afford to prepare himself—these things cover and include the chief end and aim of the State, not especially toward workingmen, but toward all men equally who are its citizens.

After the State has done these things, it cannot do more, or, rather, it should not do more. Whether a man is satisfied with a mere livelihood, or goes on to secure a competence, or seeks even to get great wealth, is a matter of the individual citizen. The State should neither help nor hold.

No system of government was ever devised so minute, so socialistic, so paternal that it could successfully undertake to guide a man in leading strings from the cradle to the grave, in his material affairs. So much for the State. Now, as to the Church.

After the American citizen, after the American man, has been brought to the point where he can support himself or support himself and his family—where he has a full stomach and a tight roof—he has the possibility and usually the inclination to turn often from material things to those spiritual.

Here is the opportunity of the Church; here is its place. To afford a man opportunity to satisfy the hunger of his soul, as the State has afforded him opportunity to satisfy the hunger of his stomach, is the great duty, the chief duty, of the Church today and always.

The Church has the guardianship of the spiritual life of the people, as the State has the guardianship of their material life. And for the Church to abandon, to any extent whatever, its work for souls, in order that it may interfere with the material and materialistic administration of the State in providing full dinner pails, for instance, is absolutely unwarranted and, eventually, must prove disastrous.

These things are so simple, so axiomatic, that it seems almost foolish to set them down here, and yet, by ignoring them, a vast number of Christian preachers are incessantly exposing their ministries to criticism and bringing their own efforts in Christian pulpits to naught.

By neither education, practical training, nor mode of thought is a preacher, who is a real Christian preacher, qualified to undertake the mechanism of civil government, for it is plain, on the face of things, that a man who qualifies himself for official life, for political life, has not the time to devote himself simultaneously to the service of God.

Therefore, the efforts of Christian preachers to break over constantly into the work of the politician, the statesman, the man of public affairs, to turn from the

saving of souls by the call of Christ for the purpose of promoting purely political movements, for the sake of discussing and helping to enact laws on questions of a purely bread-basket nature, cannot be regarded with anything except disapproval by any intelligent person who loves at once his religion and his country.

The most splendid field in the world is the field reserved for the Christian preacher. It is wide enough for his fullest energy; it calls for every effort that he can give it, and then calls again. Why, then, should a man who professes to have heard this call seek ever to turn his back on this field, this splendid field, and to lay hold of the purely secular affairs which are Caesar's?

FROM THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

The father of Burns was a devout and affectionate Scotch peasant and "of the same type as Carlyle's father." Murdoch, the teacher who had so much influence on the education of Burns, records that the poet's father was by far the best of the human race ever known to him. "The Cotter's Saturday Night," which was written in 1785, describes his father's performance of family devotions, and Chambers says that Robert succeeded him, "praying, it is said, most impressively."

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, 'round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride.
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And "Let us worship God!" he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps Dundee's wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy of the name.
Or noble Elgin beats the heavenward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickled ear no heartfelt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page * * *

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme—
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed:
How He, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head,
How his first followers and servants sped
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, alone in Patmos banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!
The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul;
And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol.